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CHARACTER!!

WE have selected the above caption, in order to call attention to the charge that is so frequently urged against the Latter-day Saints. It is said by many, both in high and low places, that the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints are not so objectionable in the abstract, but their character is not praiseworthy—but even immoral, impure, and unrighteous. Let us then join issue, and meet the charge fairly and honorably. We do not shrink from a fair and rigid trial. We even court investigation, and boldly challenge a comparison with any other body of people of the same magnitude and notoriety, either in ancient or modern times. The difficulty is, that while our enemies prefer many heinous charges against us, they rarely venture to appear in defence of their charges. In the first place, it does not furnish the least presumption that our character is bad, because that "*all manner of evil is said against us*;" for the same has been said against Jesus Christ and the whole body of primitive believers. It is well known that Jesus Christ was ostensibly put to death for his notorious crimes; and most of the prophets were slain for alleged crimes which were said to be so black and notorious as to render them unfit to live on the earth. But none of us now believe that these charges were true: on the contrary we believe them to have been malicious, false, and damnable wicked.

Mere accusations, then, are not sufficient to justify the shadow of a decision against us. Some proof must be furnished or we shall never plead guilty. If it is a crime to be at direct, settled, and immutable variance with the contradictory system of modern christianity, then we are guilty, and never expect to be penitent while eternity endures. If it is good, and pure, and virtuous fully to believe, and practically to concur with, all the revelations that ever came from the only true and living God, that made the sea and dry land, then we are a good, and pure, and virtuous people. If keeping the commandments of God with all sincerity, and diligence, and sacrifice, intitles us to a good and unsullied character, then we claim a good character in defiance of all proof to the contrary. We claim that no people of any age of the world ever kept the commandments of God more faithfully under circumstances as trying and difficult. The footsteps of our history, from Missouri to Illinois, and from Illinois to the Great Salt Lake, are marked with the blood of our martyred sons and daughters! And while it is utterly impossible for any man to show up any manifest discrepancy between the doctrines and ordinances of the Latter-day Saints, and the doctrines and ordinances of the Primitive Saints, it is equally impossible to show that the former have not maintained these doctrines and ordinances more faithfully than any other people on the face of the whole earth. They have maintained them by preaching the word, without purse or scrip, on every continent and many of the islands of the sea. They have also done it by the sacrifice of their homes and the allurements of business, and the ties of kindred and friendship. They have been driven from country to country by persecution, over a distance of territory unparalleled in the records of any other persecuted people. That *unity* which Jesus sent gifts from heaven to secure has been maintained by them to the astonishment of even their enemies. Governor Thomas Ford once avowed to the writer, that he considered the unity of the Saints so great and indissoluble as to render them formidably powerful in the midst of any other people. And the message of the same governor to the State Legislature of Illinois, contains a positive exculpation of their character. Strange that an American governor, acting under the national motto of *E pluribus unum*, "all as one," should decry so cardinal a virtue. But the sweet is called bitter, and virtue, vice; and union is discarded for division.

The only true standard of character is conformity to the revealed will of God. When men compare themselves among themselves they are not wise. It is only

when they compare their faith and conduct with the revelations of God that they are wise. If men speak not according to this standard, there is no light in them, "to the law and the testimony." Before men can successfully traduce and impeach the character of the Latter-day Saints, they have to demolish the only bible standard of character. Having consigned to oblivion the great and distinguishing doctrines and ordinances of Christ and the Apostles through their traditions, they then begin to make war upon the Saints, and say, there goes a deluded, unrighteous, and immoral Latter-day Saint! But if the Saints shall do the will of God, who shall lay anything to their charge? Is it not enough that God shall justify them? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.

But let us look around a moment and see who are our accusers, and what is the attitude *they* occupy? Our accusers are indeed the devoted advocates of modern christianity; but are they any better for all this? No, by no means. Modern christianity is a libel on the bible. It strips the bible of all that makes it savory to the souls of men, for this world and the next. Many of the abettors of christianity do this, like Paul, ignorantly in unbelief. But the evil of modern christianity is not lessened on account of their unbelief. The friends of modern christianity are the last people that should talk against the character of the Latter-day Saints; but still they talk the most, and are the most virulent opposers. Of all people that can be named on the footstool, they have the least claim to morality, righteousness, or purity of character. Be patient, and I will show you wherein they do more harm than any other people, the sceptic not excepted; and a more awful retribution awaits them than any other people, the heathen not excepted. I write advisedly—I know what I say. My reasons for such an imputation on their character are, because they make the Word of God of none effect. When God says that certain miraculous signs shall follow believers, they, with no higher authority than the opinions of men, contradict and set aside the same. When God makes solemn and unqualified promise that he will give the Holy Ghost to all whom he calls to repentance and salvation, they, by the same mere power of opinion, flatly and blasphemously deny,—saying, that that supernatural Holy Ghost alluded to is not now promised, neither is it needed.

God says that baptism is *for the remission of sins*. Many, with no authority but opinion, make this saying of no effect, and say, baptism cannot remit sins; some say they know their sins were remitted before they were baptized,—thereby they charge the all-wise God with folly.

God says, "except a man be born of the water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God;" but christian coxcombs stand up and give him the lie: and some say the water is not needed,—and the great mass of christians say the supernatural spirit is not needed. But God has no spirit but a supernatural spirit; and if a man is not born of a supernatural spirit, that gives revelation of things past, present, and future, he is not born of God's spirit; and if he is not born of God's spirit, he is a child of the devil and in his sins; and if he dies in his sins, where Christ is he cannot come.

God says that he has set in the church apostles and prophets, and for a specific object which has never yet been accomplished, neither will be until the last Saint has been born into the kingdom, and been perfected like unto Jesus Christ; but modern Christians say, in the face of all this, they are not needed. Oh, shameful contempt of the authorities that God has put in his church! God has said that little children are members of the kingdom of heaven; modern christians, casting contempt upon their citizenship, and neutralizing the force of God's word, have the temerity and impudence to sprinkle little children for baptism, thereby showing them forth in the character of sinners that have need of being born of the water. As well might they baptize the angels that come down from glory, as little innocent children that know not good from evil; but the same children, when they grow up and transgress the laws of God, and God commands such universally to repent, the same they refuse to baptize. God has instituted the ordinance of healing, by anointing with oil and laying on hands of elders; but they have discarded this ordinance and sought out many *medical* inventions. Millions of the human family have not lived out half their days, as a consequence. Awful guilt! The blood of millions will be found on their garments!

God has explicitly shown, in the person of his Son, what kind of Being He is,—declaring that Christ is the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person; but they have made the Word of God of none effect, by calling him a spirit that hath neither body, parts, nor passions,—thereby the true God is done away, and a mere human invention is substituted in his stead. Many other such like things, too numerous to mention, has modern christianity done. Now, who can think of these things, and entertain for a moment the baseless claim which modern christianity sets up to righteousness, morality, and purity? From the Scriptures are supposed to be drawn the highest and strongest incentives to sound morality and righteousness; but modern christianity has done away the great and fundamental truths of Scripture, as we have shown above; apostles and prophets are done away; a supernatural call to the priesthood is done away; the supernatural gifts of healing, tongues, interpretation, prophecy, which the apostolic church was never without, are done away; revelations, visions, dreams, and the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which the primitive church could not do without, are done away; the miraculous signs that follow believers, and by which they know that they are the true believers and the true kingdom of Christ, are done away; the ministry of angels, another very important distinguishing feature of the primitive dispensations, are done away. Thus we see that every exhibition of the supernatural power of God is done away. The alarming crisis has fully arrived when men “deny the power of God.”

But take away the *supernatural* power of God from religion and you have nothing but the *natural* power left; or, in other words, the human family is afloat from their only safe moorings, with no guide but human wisdom, which is folly with God. The ancient revelations have no power to baptize—or to minister in the place of angels—or to anoint with oil and lay on hands for healing. However much good the Scriptures did in the day when they were communicated from heaven, no man now can dispense with the gift of the Holy Ghost any better for all that; neither can he do without the ministry of angels any better for it; neither is it possible to get the remission of sins without an order of priesthood endowed with supernatural gifts, to administer baptism.

Here we make a solemn pause and ask, what, oh what, must be the character of those who so unsparingly and continuously make the word of God of none effect? What must be the feelings of a sin-avenging God to see his own word perverted, and made of no effect in accomplishing that salvation to which he has sent it? The visits of his holy angels are derided as much as they ever were by the Sodomites! The visions and power of the Holy Ghost are sneered at as much as they were on the day of pentecost! The only officers of the church by which the work of the ministry can be commenced or carried on, or by which the Saints can be brought to unity, and the body of believers be edified, are rejected, and their aid arrogantly disclaimed! Blush for thy character, oh thou advocate of modern christianity. Thou art robbing the souls of men of the most precious blessings ever revealed to man! Thou art taking from men, the proffered power of God—the healing mercy of heaven—the light of immediate revelation—the communion of angels in a day of famine, and war, and sore distress. Thou art substituting a false and strange God in the place of the true and living God. And in the midst of all thy rebellion against God, and angels, and apostles, and prophets, and contempt of the supernatural gifts of God, thou hast the hardihood to call thyself righteous and moral, and “have need of nothing!” Whereas thou art cherishing, aiding, and abetting, an apostacy, whose foundation was stained with the blood of apostles. Thou art taking from the word of God its most sacred powers, officers, and ordinances, and abrogating its most solemn and precious covenants, that have been purchased with the blood of Christ. Thou hast so mutilated and garbled the ancient gospel, for more than seventeen hundred years, and darkened the pathway to heaven, by commentaries and the precepts of men, that many generations have lived and perished under thy deceivings without God in the world. Many ages have witnessed the cries of countless millions that have died in your blind and obstinate delusion. In the absence of apostles, and spiritual, and supernatural gifts, thou hast proudly boasted of thy moral purity. Thou hast compared thyself with the heathen, and haughtily thanked God, that thou art not like the wicked heathen.

But stop a moment. Compare Glasgow, or London, or Rome, the focal point and strength of modern christianity, with Pekin, or any large pagan city, and then see how the result stands. In the former, witness the pitiful beggary, filth, and demoniac drunkenness of not a few, but rather swarms of immortal beings, basking in the sunshine of modern christianity, in dark cellars, lanes, and avenues, where there is not a window above ground to lighten the gloom that follows their obscene revellings, or alleviate the distress of their haggard penury! Witness the maimed heads and black eyes resulting from nocturnal broils; and the tattered nudity of little children (for of such is the kingdom of heaven) trained up to beggary, thievings, and obscenities too gross to be mentioned.

See that female, the primrose of creation, and "the glory of man," gathering with her fingers the very horse manure that falls in the streets for a livelihood. Look at this picture, thou boaster of modern christianity, and find a parallel case of abominable degradation in idolatrous Pekin if you can? Next, walk above ground, and pass through the streets of the great christian city, enter the spirit vaults and gin shops, and see humanity outraged in features; and reason and passion galloping across lots, as in a steeple chase, and the name of your strange God bandied about like a foot-ball. At night a stranger would think as he passed the streets that all sexual virtue was the most notorious article of merchandize. Next, go to the exchange and places of merchandize where the business of buying and selling is transacted. There you will witness duplicity, and oily smoothness, and honied flattery, artfully mingled with the most deceptive bargains compared with which pagans are mere novices. From thence go to courts and halls of state, and there the spirit of invasion, oppression, conquest, and bloody ambition are more rife than were ever known in China.

Again, compare the unity of the disciples of the Shaster with that of the professed christians of England, and the balance is greatly in favour of the former. Peace reigns more uninterruptedly (so far as our knowledge extends), among the former than among the latter. And as to the stability and strength of christian governments and institutions, they are like vessels at sea, subject to continual storms and tempests—pronounced unseaworthy, dismasted, sunk, wrecked, or captured by pirates. And to crown the climax of this most ridiculous farce, the priests of modern christianity stretch out their hands with surpliced gravity and Jehuic zeal, to arrest this fearful tendency to universal desolation and ruin. And how do they do it? They seek to do it with a half done-away bible, and a self-made modernized priesthood. Struggling like a horse disabled in two legs, without supernatural powers, to carry burthens that angels would shrink from, and the Son of God himself could not perform without the constant intervention and aid of the Almighty Father, they multiply seminaries and wax hot in theological combats, flutter with alarm, and call the world into convention in order to bring about an "*evangelical union*." From the days of Luther and Knox down to Ann Lee and the Ranters, there have been Reformers and Schismatics enough to make even Satan ashamed of a half done-away bible, and a half done-away God. Can modern priests reform the people or unite them with a half done-away bible and a *natural* Holy Ghost, and with no better angels than Cambridge and Andover parsons? Shame! Shame! Can they lay claim to character who rob God of his attributes, and do away his word by the precepts of men? You might as well steer and stop locomotives when steersmen are done away with, and fire cannon in order to do execution without powder, as to think of guiding the ship of salvation without apostles, or of checking the wickedness of mankind, without the supernatural light and power of God! The character of modern christianity is abominable everywhere. The very heathens are ashamed of her vices, and dread to come in contact with her polluted breath. Her drunkenness and debaucheries—her thievings and cheatings—her robberies and wars—her blasphemies of God and his kingdom, have reached the ears of Jehovah. When a few more of the servants of God have sealed their testimony with their blood, the shame of her nakedness will not only be made manifest, but she will be burned with fire.